

“Fall in Love
(Is So...Stupid.)”

Asma and Taylor

“Fall in Love (Is So...Stupid.)”

[As Asma began to settle into life in the United States—to buy a car, find a job, continue learning English—she also started dating. In her late teens, she described herself as “shining,” as this effervescent, friendly, open woman who made friends easily. But before she got married and settled down to have a family, Asma also described a change that occurred, one which she shared in tiny bits and pieces throughout a handful of conversations.]

T: Was there a time when...You stopped shining as much?

A: Oh, shining? No, I’m not shining right now, no. [laughs]. I mean, I was talking about when you are, uh, sixteen, seventeen.

T: Yeah.

A: You look your body, you’re ready, you just uh, so sweet and beautiful. There’s beautiful, eh, getting out the kids and being a woman, just like, eh, you’re different, right?

T: Mhm.

A: So I’m talking about that time. I was like, “Oh, I was so dangerous for the, for anyone come grab me and take me.” And I was a open person.

T: Yeah.

A: It can be, it-it can be, it can put you somewhere else if you’re open too much.

T: Where...When did you, when did you stop being open? Or have you always stayed open?

A: Um...No I stop open...in two thousand—when I was here, in America, I remember—in two thousand....[date].

T: [date]?

A: Yes.

T: Why did you stop being open?

A: Uh, it’s a...very long story [laughs gently] I uh... [pause] I used to think myself, I am the lucky person, I told you before. Shining, happy, uh, helping my family, have a car, have a job to do, my to pay my bills...

[...And the driver of that change was heartbreak.]

A: I just...We—I have a first love, and I crushed it, and yeah, I stop, I stop, I stop being open. I change a lot.

T: Did you, did you end the first love, or did he end the first love?

A: That-that was my, um...I don’t understand what that mean...

T: Did he break up with you, or did you break up with him?

A: Um, it was—it-it didn't work like that. It work like some lie? He doesn't wanna broke up, and he doesn't wanna work like—I mean, it used to be.

T: Mhm.

A: And...and I tell myself, "How, how could someone lie to you?"

T: He was lying to you?

A: Yes. "How could you..." I mean, lying, and, and...I mean did you see, eh, eh, a weird people, like you can never tell what they are?

T: Mhm.

A: Did you see someone like that?

T: Like you, like you can't really tell what's on their mind? What they're thinking?

A: Yes. It's that person is close to you, maybe your friend or, or someone you family?

T: Mhm.

A: But you never tell this person is like that.

T: Yeah.

A: Is, person who...You see sometime. He's nice, he's a good person, even the girls or boy.

T: Mhm.

A: But the, the other time you see like he's not...in the way you're thinking...I get frustration, like, eh... [pause] [date], it was the most difficult year in my life.

T: Really?

A: Yeah. But I didn't hurt, I didn't get accident, nobody kick me, but for, for my mentally, um, for my thinking, to be secure myself...I just locked everything. I just locked it. I just—when I met my husband, it was the day I give up for the marriage.

[fade]

A: Yeah. I was, I was eh, like a bird before.

T: Yeah?

A: Like, eh, flying everywhere, and believing everybody, and...same time, scared.

T: Yeah.

A: I was in Syria, I used to scare to date anybody. I was so scared because there's a lot of strangers there.

T: Yeah.

A: Um...but being in United State, uh, I also always scared and careful myself...

T: Mhm.

A: But believing anyone if you don't know him, is not easy.

T: Yeah.

A: It's not easy, I mean, eh...yeah. After that, I stop flying like a bird.

T: Yeah.

A: I say, "You need to...come down and have a good experience to know the people."

T: Yeah.

[fade]

A: Um, being young age is, a lot of lesson we don't have it. But sometime, it come to you by story, and you get it read by story, and sometime it will happen to you.

T: Yeah.

A: It-It happen to me.

T: Yeah.

A: It happen to me, and it change my, my personality, a lot.

T: Yeah. Are you better for it?

A: What does that...

T: Are you, are you a better person for it? Do you feel...

A: Better than for him?

T: Do you feel, do you feel...How—

A: Ooh! The life I have it now?

T: It changed, it changed you. But, like your personality. Do you—the person you are now, versus the person you were before, this person is better.

A: Yes. Yes.

T: Yeah.

A: Yes. Because now I, I take everything seriously.

T: Yeah.

A: Yeah, I don't play myself now. Before? Hm.

[pause]

T: It was love that did it. Not anything else that you've experienced.

A: Yes

T: It was love. It was having your heart broken by somebody you trusted.

A: Yes, it was, even when I—that time, even when I was sharing with my friend, and I *knew* it is wrong. I *knew* it is wrong, the way I'm—I'm follow him, for his love coming back to me, and girls, my-my roommate saying, "Hey. Put the trash that man. He's not for you."

T: Yeah?

A: "We know you're good person, but he's not for you. He's a playboy, and you don't have no family here, you're by yourself. You don't need anyone...drive you crazy. You need someone...let you set down and, and just have whatever you're wishing for. Not, not that guy. Just leave it, [Asma]."

T: Yeah.

A: I couldn't. I couldn't. Every time he come back or he text me, I just [snaps] follow like that. Until I...

T: You took control of your own life.

A: Yeah. Took...It, it took me time. It took me time to forget.

[This is a powerful statement. One that we discussed again and again. But Asma wasn't sure if she wanted to share these experiences with others.]

A: I don't want anybody to hurt like—I didn't kill anybody, but I don't want anyb—

T: You don't want anybody to do what you did.

A: What I did is not a good for me, it was not good for my religion, it was not, it was not good at all. And the thing when we are heartbroken, we are love, we really love. We don't just mess up for a love and broken up and love and broken up. As I, as I told you, my religion is very secure [?] to love a man?

T: Mhm.

A: Is *very*—you have to know, this man you will marry, we coming to the serious information we get married. We're not gonna just hang up with some people and then get together and then leave another one, it's hard for a Muslim like that.

T: Mhm.

A: So, when we're dating, we can talk on the phone, we say something, we can ah, that's the normal things.

T: Mhm.

A: It's not make us heartbroken, but when we love, we thinking about we're gonna get married.

T: Okay.

A: And that's the final decision.

T: Yeah.

A: To take the girl. To change her life.

T: Yeah.

A: So, if you fall down, [sighs] it's maybe gonna be whole universe, you gonna have experience change your life.

[The magnitude of the feelings of heartbreak she experienced did really feel like the whole universe was collapsing for Asma. It changed her body, her mind, and her spirit.]

A: The way I felt, it was very—all my bones broken. My heart, it feel like something's taking and putting...A hot water and taking out. I couldn't even drive. I couldn't even drive. I was...near to find my, my work, because I was always...Call off. And I'm not active.

T: Yeah.

A: That's, that's the most worst I have ever felt that pain. [the most painful half-breath-half-laugh]

T: Yeah.

A: That was my first love, that was my last love. Even now, I love my husband, but not the way I did it. I don't think so. Because I already have experience...I don't know. And maybe, maybe you never feel that way. Maybe you never, I don't want you to happen to you, never.

[pause]

T: Would you want to share that? Or no? We can also think about it, you don't have to make that decision...

A: No, sharing, sharing, sharing is not that much pain for me. I'm not feeling, um, scared for the permission [??].

T: Okay.

A: But I worry about the, the young people who is reading my book, or maybe reading my journal [inhales] to behave the way I behave.

T: Yeah.

[“The way I behave.” Asma's actions are a source of guilt for her. However, before she shared her behavior with me—and before we share her actions with you—it is important to understand the source of her heartbreak and pain. And that source, I think, is honesty. In truth, the lack of it.]

A: I didn't have any truth from that man.

T: Yeah.

A: I broke it, one, two, third time. I broke up the third time, it was decision I take it.

T: Yeah.

A: Because every time I tell him, “We don’t want anymore in touch,” he keep follow me in Facebook, and the calling, and just...

T: Wow.

A: He drive me, crazy?

T: Mhm.

A: [sighs] And I already loved him.

T: You loved him.

A: Yeah. Now, I—when I, when I marry my husband, I didn’t love the way I loved that guy.

T: Yeah.

A: I just...I see he’s a family one, he’s a, he need the family, and I make decision, and...My husband, I test him a lot. The thing I test him every time we say something, he will, he will be on time. He will be on time. If we promise together, he is there. He never broke there...

T: Yeah. And he’s honest.

A: He very honest. [pause] The thing I learn from the first love, lesson first love? Is...it was for me lesson? To not use the people for love, but be honest. Be honest. Love will come maybe, maybe respect will work. Maybe everything will work there. But being honest is so much important. Yeah. And I get, most the time, my husband, he very honest.

T: Yeah.

A: If he don’t wanna laugh he say, “I don’t wanna laugh.”

T: Yeah?

A: “I’m feeling sad today.” Or I’m not happy today. Leave me alone.”

T: Yeah.

A: He’s very honest.

T: Yeah. And you like that?

A: I like it!

T: Yeah?

A: I don’t want someone who make me, drive me crazy, because I’m human, I have one brain.

T: Yeah.

A: I wanna believe you for somebody. You no my family, you no my sister—I don't know you before...I mean, how can I believe you if you not everything?

T: Mhm.

A: If you drive me on day, that thing, maybe next day you're gonna kill me. I don't know you.

T: Yeah.

A: Yeah, but trust is beautiful when you're out the country.

T: Yeah.

A: I mean...I say, when you're out the country, like...I always describe myself, "You're alone. No mom. No sister."

T: Mhm.

A: "No cousin, no friends, no...I mean, you're *far* away from your family. So...When you believing the people, you don't know them before? Trust them."

T: So you closed, so you closed yourself after him—

A: Yeah—

T: —Because you realized that...

A: I realized, I...

T: You were being honest, and he wasn't back.

A: He wasn't back.

T: And so that made you close up.

A: Yeah. That, that make me fall down a lot. That make me not to believe human people easily.

T: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

[That dishonesty fueled a pain and rage in her that she had never felt before. And she acted on it.]

A: I mean, the-the reason I say I don't want to share is...I was trying...to be opposite the way I was. Like, um, cheating, telling something not true to the mans who are interest in me. Left them in the parking lot someone, like someone call me and say, "Okay, I wanna meet you where?" "I'm tired, I'm at home, you can come meet me at home." "Okay." Coming, waiting for me in the parking lot for longer...

T: Mhm.

A: The anger I receive from, from that boy, I just was with the other, more innocent. And um, almost it took me six months to feel that angry.

T: Yeah.

A: And finally I, I felt normal. And then I pray a lot and I felt normal. I don't want anyone act like the way I did it. It was very bad. [laughs, embarrassed] I mean, it was very bad.

T: So you don't want to share things that you feel like...you don't feel comfortable sharing.

A: It's not...It make me comfortable, but it's not good for those, those reading my journal. It's not good to... [sighs] I mean...I almost, I almost was, uh, was losing my personality.

T: Yeah.

A: Then I come back.

T: Yeah.

A: So...And it's not good when you're losing your personality, something make you down.

T: Yeah.

A: Your shoulders, your head is *down*. Your power, your beautiful think, your innocence, you-you changing to angry things, you're showing the people you're nice, but you're not nice, you're cheating, you're doing a lot of things you treat the people, and that's you know you're doing on purpose. Someone make you angry.

T: Do you think... [pause]

A: It took me time to pray and forget it.

T: Do you think it would help people to know that you struggled? It would make them realize that maybe if they're struggling, it's okay, too?

A: Yeah. There's a lot of people struggle...

T: Yeah. But you don't want to share...that part of your life?

A: I mean...What I, what I scared to not share is, I know every person in this life struggle. No one born clean and...grow up and get old clean.

T: Mhm.

A: There is part of your life, it make you stuck and I stuck for a lot of things, for my own personality, but that's the first time I stuck with someone else, they took me something.

T: Yeah.

A: And...Praying a lot, I survived.

T: But, like...I'm curious as to why you don't want to share that with people.

A: Why I don't wanna share? Mm.

T: Is it...Is it like, kind of embarrassing? Like, do you think people in your culture, people in your culture will judge you for it?

A: Eh, no, nononono—I mean, they did mess more than me. They do mess more than me [laughs]. I don't think that I did most mess things...

T: Mhm.

A: But...The thing I did it was, um, I never [??] I never did anything bad, but I used to start anyone who interest me, to mess up. Like, I'm sure I don't want to know about it. In this minute, I'm heartbroken? [taps table]

T: Yeah.

A: But I'm gonna play.

T: Yeah.

A: I did that. That was my purpose. I wanna play this time.

T: So you kind of...did to men what he did to you?

A: Yeah.

T: Yeah? And you're embarrassed by that?

A: And I embarrassed myself.

T: And you don't want to talk about it?

A: And sometime...I know what I did, what I done, and sometime I ask myself what I done, but share with you, but sharing with here,

T: Sharing with everybody...

A: Sharing with here...

[fade]

A: So...I always don't like...The others take a risk, or the others...

T: Okay.

A: The others hurt other people.

T: Yeah.

A: Because I feel bad I hurt someone.

[But if these cyclical, intertwined selections from our conversations convey anything, it is that she recognized the fault in her actions and actively worked to grow and change for the better.]

T: What made you, what made you change your mind?

A: Uh, I pray a lot.

T: Because if you tell people why...

A: Yeah.

T: So you, you prayed a lot to find—why did you pray a lot? To clean yourself of it?

A: No. I prayed a lot to be, eh, eh, eh, the way I was.

T: Yeah.

A: The way I was. 'Cause...What it make me to...

T: The way you were before your heart was broken?

A: Yes.

T: That's what you, to be the person again—

A: I prayed to get clean, and to be the person I was before.

T: Yeah.

A: Because I, I, I felt my heart, someone taking my heart and played on it.

T: And played on it?

A: Yeah. So I want to my heart back, my heart, have a face for my heart who was there. And, and normal child who—I mean, normal child I was grown woman, and I—I used to ask myself, “What make you to love this person?”

T: Yeah.

A: But sometimes you don't know. There's no answer. There's no answer what make you to love.

T: Yeah.

A: Even if he did...Do, he's not doing anything good for you, you still love him.

T: Mm.

A: Is very, most hard thing I have ever processed.

T: Yeah.

A: Yeah, and it scared me to happen to—now I worry about my child, my, my children.

T: Yeah.

A: One day it will be like that, one of them.

T: Yeah.

A: But I don't-I don't know how will I protect them.

T: Yeah.

A: I will-I will prepare, when they get teenager?

T: Yeah.

A: I will tell them, before I die, I will tell them everything.

T: Yeah?

A: I will tell them to be careful. To be *you*.

T: To not do what you did.

A: To be *you* whatever is happen to you.

T: Yeah.

A: Never change. Because *you* are so expensive. Nothing else can, can replace the human being. Nothing in this world. Money, gold, anything. Nothing. Human, human are very expensive. You are never gonna have as much a try unless God give you that gift.

T: Mm.

A: So how are we gonna play? How are we gonna, how are we gonna forget ourself? That's important. Yeah. Never forget yourself. Never. No matter what happen to you, you will gone one day, but you have to be *there*. You have to be *there*.

T: Okay.

A: Yeah.

[pause]

T: [murmurs, awed by the moment] Thank you.

A: I was driving in the middle of the—I used to work at FedEx...

[fade]

A: ...And then in the free way, I was thinking, feeling my pain, and I say, "What about your safety?" When I feel that pain, I cannot focus anything. My bones, my muscles, I feel a lot of tired.

T: Mhm.

A: And then one day, one day I say, "What about your safety?"

T: Yeah.

A: You kind of like losing yourself. You're only person here. Nobody can care about you, nobody—your mom is not here to hold you. Your sisters not here to be on your shoulder, to hold you tightly, hold you, so be strong. Put your feet in the floor, you're gonna pass these days.

T: Mhm. One day, you realized that.

A: Yeah.

T: That you needed to pray.

A: And then I realized I need to pray a lot to forget everything I'm feeling.

T: And you did.

A: I did.

T: And you found a different kind of love.

A: I did. Is, is, the gift, how much I was strong. How much I was feeling like I'm doing something bad, I have to not to do the people, I have to not fighting no one, I have to gather [?] place with someone better than me. Yeah.

T: That's beautiful.

A: Yeah. Someone who is, who is very very very responsible person.

T: Yeah.

A: I always thankful. [tears up] I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I can share, I don't mind. But I don't want other people behave like that. Because I know, I know young people are always gonna broke up. Gonna fall in love again and broke up. Fall in love again... Yeah.

[Asma found the honesty and trust she had lost in that hardest year with her current husband. It was a different kind of love, though. Not anything like that first fall into love.]

A: Yeah, fall in love is so...stupid.

T: Is so stupid?

A: I don't like, I don't like it [laughs, murmurs] I don't like, I don't like fall in love.

[pause]

A: In my religion, in my religion they say, "Fall in love after your marriage."

T: After marriage.

A: Yeah. Never fall in love before marriage.

T: You think that's the way to do it?

A: Uh, I did. Yeah, it work with me. I fall love after I get married my husband. Yeah. I mean...I- I was interest him, he was interest me, but...Really, I felt love after my [??] days.

T: Yeah?

A: I feel very, very, this person is the one who care about me. Who wanted me, really. No matter what is...

T: No matter the feelings of love.

A: Yeah.

T: He wanted you as a person.

A: Yeah.

T: And then the love came.

A: Yeah. He wanna be there for you. I mean...Someone who [sighs] very different. When someone need a family and someone just don't know what you need it. Is very different. Is very different.

T: Yeah.

A: And then I told you the man, the Muslim man, when he get married? He have to pay everything.

T: Yeah.

A: So that's not easy. You cannot pay everything the person you don't need it. Is also hard to make the decision for them, if they marry.

T: Yeah.

A: Is also hard for us to make decision who we are marry, because you are still, eh...

T: Yeah.

A: You have your virginity, you have thing, and nobody touch your booty before, I mean is very important and very...scary process. [laughs] Excited and scary together.

T: Yeah.

A: And yeah. Finally, yeah. Finally, respect. I respect a lot for my husband now.

T: Yeah?

A: Even if I angry, I still respect him.

T: Still respect him. That's beautiful.

A: Yeah.

[It *was* beautiful. My voice appears more in this selection because it was a topic we wrestled with together, a source of information Asma wanted to share with me: a young woman who might experience the same joys and pains of first love. So I decided to ask if she would be

willing to share this story, despite her fears that others would make the same mistakes that she made.]

T: I think hearing what you just said and saying, “That wasn’t the right thing for me to do. To act on my pain and make other people feel that pain.” That that wasn’t right...But *knowing* that somebody else has felt that way...might make them feel better.

A: Yeah.

T: We don’t have to talk about the bad things that you did, but we could talk about how much it hurt.

A: Yeah.

T: So it’s up to you. We can think about it...

A: Yeah. Yeah. We can share. We can share. I don’t mind, we can share.

[fade]

T: Would you, would it be its own recording?

A: Yeah. Put it, put it.

T: What would, what would you call that recording?

A: Umm... “Fall in Love?”

T: “Fall in Love?”

A: [laughs] I think, I don’t know another one, we have—

T: We don’t have to—we can make a different title for it...

[So here it is. Thank you, Asma, for sharing.]